

Employees Attitude Towards Performance Appraisal Practices in Ethiopian Private Banking Industry

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Abstract

Performance appraisal, though an important function of human resource/personnel management, has not received the degree of concern it deserves. This function, if properly exercised by organizations, can serve a number of purposes, mainly administrative and developmental in nature. However, despite these intended goals, performance appraisal seems not to be effective in most cases mainly due to the subjective nature of criteria (standard) of performance, lack of rater understanding of or inadequate training on performance appraisal, which consequently led to the less importance and emphasis attached to it. This study investigated the attitude and reactions of employees' towards the overall performance appraisal system as well as its major component parts such as standard setting, appraisal instrument, feedback, and appeal procedure in private banking industry in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Data were obtained via a questionnaire from 254 participants of four banks (Awash International Bank S.C, Dashen Bank S.C, Wegagen Bank S.C and United Bank S.C). The findings of the study indicated that respondents perceived the performance appraisal system as an unfair/subjective and a system which cannot accurately measure their job related performance. So that, the evaluation criteria of private banks in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia were not job related, not objective, not measure personal characteristics of employees. The banks should use criteria which are measurable, objective, and job related.

Keywords: Performance appraisal, human resource, employee, attitude

1.1 Background of the study

Performance appraisal, though an important function of human resource/personnel management, has not received the degree of concern it deserves. This function, if properly exercised by organizations, can serve a number of purposes, mainly administrative and developmental in nature Mount K. (1984). However, despite these intended goals, performance appraisal seems not to be effective in most cases mainly due to the subjective nature of criteria (standard) of performance, lack of rater understanding of or inadequate training on performance appraisal, which consequently led to the less importance and emphasis attached to it. Conducting performance evaluation helps organizations to reward and promote effective performers and identify ineffective performers to developmental programs or other personnel actions that are essential to the effectiveness of Human Resource Management Maund.L. (2001).

Longenecker and Fink (1999) cited several reasons that formal performance evaluations are to stay in organizations. According to them, formal evaluations are required to justify a wide range of human resource decisions such as pay raises, promotions, demotions, terminations, etc. It is also required to determine employees' training need. The authors cited a study on high performance organizations that the practice of performance appraisal was cited as one of the top 10 vehicles for creating competitive advantage. Moreover, performance measurement allows the organization to tell the employee something about their rates of growth, their competencies, and their potentials (Cleveland JN 1995).

That is according to National Bank of Ethiopia Quarterly Bulletin; September 2010, in the private banking history of Ethiopia they were early to operate their banking function and still they have large branches and large market share in the nation respectively, so it was believed that they could represent the rest private banks in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in order to get the needed data and to conclude the study.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Improving organizational productivity (performance) has become one of the overriding goals of human resource management. Organizational performance is the synergetic sum total of the performance of all employees in the organization. This is being the fact, employee performance has to be closely planned, coached, and appraised to ensure that it is in line with the interests of organizations. However, according to (Michel Beer, 1987), it seems that performance appraisal is not given the proper attention by most organizations in the country and is exercised periodically more as a usual practice than as a tool of motivation on the basis of which various administrative and developmental decisions are taken (Meyer. H.1991).A formal performance evaluation program can have a number of objectives including performance assessment and improvement, providing a basis for individual remuneration, identifying training needs and, assessing suitability for promotion Denisi and Griffin,(2008).Moreover, productive performance evaluation serves many purposes, including: letting employees learn of their weaknesses and strengths, new goals and objectives are agreed upon, employees become an active participant in the evaluation process, and employees renew their interest in being part of the organization now and in the future. On the contrary,

performance evaluation suffers from so many problems. In most cases, the performance evaluation results do not adequately reflect the ability of the job incumbent. This could be attributed to the subjective nature of the evaluation criteria, the irrelevance of the criteria used to evaluate the performance of the workers, lack of skills and knowledge of the raters, the subjectivity, favoritism and bias of the raters, lack of continuous documentation and inability to provide feedback as to the results of the performance evaluation (Khan.A. 2004).

Therefore, by understanding performance appraisal problems, this study has conducted to evaluate the performance appraisal practices of private banks in Ethiopia and also to assess the employees' attitude towards the practice of four selected banks (Awash International Bank S.C, Dashen Bank S.C, Wegagen Bank S.C and United Bank S.C) as a case study by covering four of their areal banks in Addis Ababa.

1.3. Research questions

This study has tried to answer the following main research questions:

1. What are the major reasons for conducting performance evaluation of the banks?
2. What are the real problems facing the Banks with regard to the performance evaluation practices?
3. What is employee's attitude towards performance appraisal practice of their organizations?
4. To what extent does performance appraisal standard of the organizations initiate employees towards their job?
5. Does a performance appraisal standard match with the job requirements of the employee?

1.4 Objectives/aim of the study

1.4.1 The general objective of the study

General objective of this research was to study employees' attitude towards performance appraisal practices of private banks in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

1.4.2 The specific objectives of the study

Specific objectives of this study were:

1. To test employees' attitude towards performance appraisal practice of the organizations.
2. To evaluate the extent of performance appraisal standard of the organization and employees initiation towards their job.
3. To analyze the major problems (factors) in the process of performance appraisal practices of the organizations under study.
4. To match performance appraisal standard of the organizations with the job requirements of the employee.

2. Review of Related Literature Review

2.1 Why organizations conduct performance appraisal?

According to Taylor, P. (cited in NCETA*, 2005, Denisi & Griffin, 2008) some workers can find performance appraisals to be threatening or intimidating that are conducted for hurting or punishing them. However, with good design and planning, performance appraisals can be rewarding and constructive for workers and managers / supervisors. When performance appraisals are clearly linked with recognition and rewards, there are also likely to be benefits for workers' motivation, productivity and retention. It also may provide the basis for other personnel actions which typically include: (1) performance pay, (2) training and career development, (3) promotion and placement, (4) recognition and rewards, (5) disciplinary actions, and (6) identifying selection criteria (Vance, 2006 as cited in Grubb, 2007, Mathis and Jackson, 2008, Denisi and Griffin, 2008).

2.2 Who conducts appraisal?

Another question with respect to performance appraisal practice of the organization is who should conduct performance appraisal, mostly in actual business environment immediate supervisor/manager conducts appraisal. However, it can be done by anyone familiar with the performance of individual employee. Possibly it may be; superiors, peers, customers, subordinates, self-appraisal (Densis and Griffin, 2008, Mathis and Jackson, 2008) A rating program should help by ensuring that raters have an opportunity to observe the Performance they rate, have ability to make sound judgments, and use appropriate standards against which to rate (Barret, 1966, pp. 99-101).

2.3 What is appraised?

The criterion or criteria that management choose to evaluate, when appraising employee performance, will have a major influence on what employees do. Generally, content to be appraised is determined on the basis of job analysis. Content to be appraised may be in the form of contribution to organizational objectives (measures) like production, costs savings, return on capital, etc. (Robbins, 1996, pp. 650- 651 & Rao & Rao, 2004, pp. 220). but only the naïve would ignore the reality that such traits are frequently used in organizations as criteria for assessing an employee's level of performance (Robbins, 1996, pp. 650-651).

2.4 How often should appraisal be done?

Another reason that some managers resist frequent subordinate evaluations is that they produce stress, especially if a rater has to use a system in which he/she has little faith or confidence. There is also the stress associated with having to inform another person that he/she is not performing at acceptable levels (Srinivas & Motowidlo, 1987, as cited in Ivancevich & Glueck 1989, pp. 338-339). Researchers have found that raters under stress tend to notice and recall negative information about those being evaluated.

2.5 Problems in the performance evaluation process

Performance appraisal is one of the oldest management tools available, and the problems associated with it are equally well established (Michel Beer, 1987). Different scholars have suggested the possible sources of performance appraisal problems. Accordingly, there are three major sources of problems in performance evaluation.

2.6 System Design and operating problems

According to Michael Beer (1987) many of the problems in performance appraisal stem from the appraisal system it self-the objectives it is intended to serve, the administrative system in which it is embedded, and the forms and procedures that make up the system. The performance system can be blamed if the criteria for evaluation are poor, the technique used is cumbersome, or the system is more form than substance. If the criteria used focus solely on activities rather than output (results) or on personality traits rather than performance, the evaluation may not be well received (Junlin Pan and Guoqing Li, 2006; Michel Beer, 1987; Ivancevich, 2004; Cynthia Lee, 1985). As Henderson (1984) cited in Deborah F.B and Brain H. Kleiner (1997), In the study made by Clinton O.Longenecker(1977) on 120 seasoned managers drawn from five different large US organizations entitled “why managerial performance appraisal are ineffective”, the majority(83%) of the respondents argued that managerial performance appraisal is destined to fail because of (among the many reasons cited) unclear performance criteria or ineffective rating instrument used. According to Deborah F.B and Brain H. Kleiner (1997) organizations need to have a systematic framework to ensure that performance appraisal is “fair” and “consistent”.

2.7 Raters’ problems in Performance Evaluation

Even if the system is well designed, problems can arise if the raters (usually supervisors) are not cooperative and well trained (Ivancevich, 2004). This is often because they have not been adequately trained or have not participated in the design of the program. Inadequate training of raters can lead to a series of problems in completing performance evaluations, including: problems with standards of evaluation, Halo effect, Leniency or harshness, central tendency error, “Recency of events” error, contrast effects, personal bias(stereotyping); “similar to me”(Ivancevich, J.M.,2004; Cascio, F.W., 2003; Aswathappa, K., 2002).

According to Mark Cook (1995), Performance appraisals suffer from four major problems. These are Biases, politicking, impressions management and undeserved reputation. Biases could be consciously or unconsciously because of age, ethnicity, gender, physical appearance, attitudes and fundamental values of the raters, and personal like or dislike. On the other hand there is an evidence uncovering the reasons why managers deliberately give low performance ratings to the subordinates:(a) to shock someone back on to a higher performance track;(b) to teach a rebellious subordinate a lesson; (c) to send someone a message that they should consider leaving the organization; (d) and to build a well- documented record of poor performance to speed up terminations. (Longenecker et.al.; 1987 as cited in Mark Cook; 1995)

2.8 Ratees’ problems in Performance Evaluation

The problems of performance evaluation can also be attributed to the ratees. For instance, their attempt to create unnecessary impression and work area ingratiation is one of the major problems with respect to ratees. According to Mark Cook (1995), organizations occasionally exist in which subordinates gain credit for pushing ahead with management plans that are absurdly wrong, in pursuit of aims which are completely pointless, stifling criticism either of purpose or of method with cries of “commitment” and “loyalty”. An extreme case of this trend may be termed the World War I mentality. As Wayne, S.J. and Ferris, G.R.,(1990) cited in Mark Cook(1995) there are three underlying types of ingratiating behavior, or “upward influence styles.

3. Research design and study area

This study was conducted through survey research method. The target population of this study comprised the employees (clerical) and supervisors and managers of selected private banks in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. For this purpose four private banks and four of their branches including their head offices located in Addis Ababa were selected.

3.1 Sampling design

In selecting the research subjects, judgment (purposive) sampling method has been used. Judgmental sampling method was used to select the four private banks located in Addis Ababa; through purposive way that the respondents had selected were only those who have been evaluated at least for one year in their organizations.

Table3.1 Sample determination of the study of the selected private banks in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

No	List of banks	Supervisors/managers	Clerical employees	Sample size
1	AIB,S.C	82	1100	110
2	Dashen Bank S.C	60	760	76
3	United Bank S.C	62	510	51
4	Wegagen Bank S.C	51	603	61
Total		255	2973	298

Source from their respective banks, HRM employee profile

3.2 Data sources, collection methods and instruments

The study was conducted based on the qualitative and quantitative (mixed) research technique to describe the employees' attitude towards the practices of performance evaluation in private banking industry of Ethiopia (Awash International Bank S.C, Dashen Bank S.C, Wegagen Bank S.C and United Bank S.C).

3.3 Data presentation, analysis and interpretation

After the data has been collected, descriptive analysis method has been implemented. That was questionnaires were coded, entered into computer and analyzed and presented in the form of tables and diagrams using SPSS Software. For analysis purpose the responses under Likert scale were grouped in to five major categories: agree, strongly agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. Moreover, the interview questions were integrated to the responses of employees through

4. Data presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

From the total distributed (298) questionnaires, about n=254(85%) have been collected and this was acceptable and the data has been analyzed and interview responses were analyzed together with the questionnaire accordingly.

TABLE 4.1: Summary of the respondents' background information

Sex variables	Freq	%	Age variables	Freq	%	Marital status	Freq	%	Education level variables	Freq	%	Work	Freq	%
Male	182	71.7	Under 25	28	11.0	Married	96	38.0	Technical	5	2.0	1-4	118	46.5
Female	72	28.3	25-34	175	68.9	Unmarried	158	62.0	diploma	52	20.5	5-9	110	43.3
			35-44	48	18.9							>10 years	26	10.2
									BA/BSC	185	72.8			
			45-54	3	1.2						4.7	-	-	-
			>55	0	0				Diploma	12				
Total	254	100		254	100		254	100		254	100		254	100

Source: data from primary sources

As it has been shown in the tables above, about 71.7% of the respondents were male and the remaining 28.3 % of the respondents were female. Regarding the marital status of the respondents large number (62%) were unmarried and few (38%) married. the above table the analysis shows that the largest percent (68.9%) of the respondents were between the ages 25-34. The second largest group (18.9%) indicates their age being before 35 and 45 years but (11.0%) were in the age category of fewer than 25. In terms of work experience in the organizations, 46.5% have served one to four years and 43, 3% have worked from five to six years, while a small percentage, that is only 10.2% have a service record of ten years and above. we can see that a large majority n=185(72,8%) of the respondents were first degree holders, while 20.5%, 4.7% and 2% have hold college diploma, masters degree and technical certificates, respectively.

Table 4.2 Summary of performance appraisal practices and their evaluation criteria's in the selected banks

Degree of agreement	The company conducts periodical performance appraisal		The company has a good performance appraisal system.(bases of evaluations are favorable/related to job)		The Evaluation criteria are related to job demand(quantity, quality, time and cost)		The performance evaluation criteria used in the organization is capable of measuring my true performance	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	153	60.2	46	18.1	30	11.8	19	7.5
Agree	90	35.5	31	12.2	20	7.9	58	22.8
Neutral	11	4.3	33	13.0	58	22.8	100	39.4
Disagree	0	0	138	54.3	140	55.1	67	26.4
Strongly disagree	0	0	6	2.4	6	2.4	10	3.9
Total	254	100.0	254	100.0	254	100	254	100.0

Source: data from primary sources

Large number, n=153(60%) of the respondents strongly agree with the statement 'The company conducts periodical performance appraisals in selected banks' and 35.5% of the respondents agree that their organization conducts periodical performance appraisal. However, almost few (4.3%) of the participants became indifferent on their banks evaluation period. Moreover, majority (n=138, 54.3%) of the respondents didn't agree that the company performance evaluation criteria were job related.

At a standstill n=140 (55.1%) of the participants disagree with the statement 'The Evaluation criteria are related to job demand (quantity, quality, time and cost)', This goes in line with open ended question response that the respondents were not only evaluated with the job requirements but they evaluated with the elements which are not required from them, one of their reason was the evaluation parameters were same for all employees including the management/supervisors.

Table 4.3 Summary of the evaluators' knowledge and attitude on evaluation

Degree of agreement	My organization ensures that I am assigned a rater who knows what I am supposed to be doing		My rater/organization lets me know how I am doing		My rater/organization helps me to understand the process used to evaluate and rate my performance		My organization makes sure that I am assigned a rater who is qualified to evaluate my work	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	33	13.0	32	12.6	26	10.2	46	20.0
Agree	114	44.9	125	49.2	93	36.6	103	40.6
Neutral	56	22.0	48	18.9	70	27.6	54	21.3
Disagree	39	15.4	39	15.4	52	20.5	43	14.8
Strongly disagree	12	4.7	10	3.9	13	5.1	8	3.3
Total	254	100	254	100	254	100	254	100

Source: data from primary sources

The above table indicates that, about 44.9% of the respondents agree with the statement 'My organization ensures that I am assigned a rater who knows what I am supposed to do' and 22% of the respondents became neutral to the question and about 15.4% of the respondents were disagree. Furthermore, from the summary 'the organization or the rater lets the employee to know how he/she is doing', in this regard about 49.2% of the response shows that the respondents agree that the rater lets the employee to know how he/she was doing but about 18.9% of the respondents were indifferent to the statement and 15.4% of the respondents were not agree. This analysis result indicates and the interview conducted to the supervisors and the concerned managers of the selected banks, the organization/ rater lets the employee to know how he/she was doing and there close supervision to the employee.

Moreover, about 40.6% of the respondents agree with the statement 'My organization makes sure that I am assigned a rater who is qualified to evaluate my work' and 21.3% of the respondents were indifferent to the

statement and about 20% of the respondents strongly agree, but about 14.8% of the respondents disagree with the statement while few (3.3%) of the respondents were strongly disagree with the statement. As the result of this analysis and the interview conducted to the concerned managers of the selected banks and concerned HRM staff of the banks, they were giving training to the raters and closed supervisors of the organization. In this case the raters of the banks were trained.

Table 4.4 Summary of the employees' attitude towards the overall appraisal system of their organizations

Degree of agreement	Overall, I think the appraisal system in our organization is fair		I am satisfied with the appraisal feedback aspect of my performance		You are satisfied with the way the Performance appraisal system is used to evaluate and rate your performance	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	11	4.3	22	8.7	19	7.5
Agree	24	9.4	54	21.3	63	24.8
Neutral	42	16.5	104	40.9	93	36.6
Disagree	85	33.5	59	23.2	65	25.6
Strongly disagree	92	36.2	15	5.9	14	5.5
Total	254	100.0	254	100.0	254	100.0

Source: Compiled from primary data as processed by SPSS

As it is easily seen in the above table (Table4.15), regarding the statement 'Overall, I think the appraisal system in our organization is fair' 36.2 % (n=92) of the respondents strongly disagree to the statement. From this analysis result and the opinion collected from the participants through open ended questions, the attitude towards fairness of the evaluation practices of their organization was not accepted by their employees/subordinates, because of high subjectivity and biasness of raters to give high weight to their friends and other relatives. When we came to the statement 'I am satisfied with the feedback aspect of my performance' about 40.9% of the respondents became in different. Moreover, the statement 'You are satisfied with the way the Performance appraisal system is used to evaluate and rate your performance' about 36.6% of the participants were neutral to the statement but 25.6% disagree with the statement and also 5.5% of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement, while 24.8% of the respondents agree with the statement and only 7.5% of the respondents strongly agree with the statement.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the results of the study obtained through the questionnaire distributed to 254 employees of the selected private banks in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (Awash International Bank S.C, Dashen Bank S.C, United Bank S.C, and Wegagen Bank S.C, and four of their branches) and the interview conducted to 10 of the key raters/managers and HRM staffs of the selected banks, the following conclusions and recommendations were made.

5.1 Conclusions

Generally, based on the analysis result and open ended questions response of the participants of the study, majority of the participants indicated that they were not satisfied with the existing appraisal process (system) of their organization and they have negative attitude towards performance appraisal system of their organization, again they believed that the purpose of appraisal in their organization was for control and recognition of employee by their respective supervisor and manger, so the existing appraisal system of the private banks in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia is needed to be changed.

5.2 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusions reached, the following recommendations are forwarded

In order to bring goal clarity (transparency) and objectivity, the organizations should strive to develop a system whereby the performance evaluation criteria are jointly determined by both the rater and the rate. In addition, effective two-way communication must be part of the performance planning process prior to any evaluation to set the standard by which employees' performance will be judged.

The banks should encourage the participation of its employees/subordinates in the design of the form that is used to evaluate the performance of the workers and it should take into account the differences among jobs in terms of their requirements and characteristics, which are not generalizing evaluation parameters to all employees and supervisors/managers. Therefore, in order for the appraisal system to be effective, at least the forms that measures jobs having similar characteristics need to be customized and tailor made.

The appraisal system of the banks should be designed in such a ways that it is future oriented and focused on

the long term developmental benefits rather than focusing on the controlling aspect only which is short term in nature.

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